

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

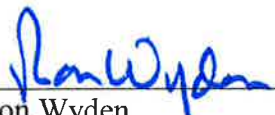
Dear Secretary Perdue and Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

We write urging you to deliver the Secure Rural Schools payments as promptly as possible, despite the recent government shutdown. County governments and schools across the country are concerned that the government shutdown will delay the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management from administering fiscal year 2018 Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) payments in a timely manner.

Over 700 counties and 4,400 school districts in more than 40 states rely on SRS payments to fund schools and essential services like roads and public safety. The SRS program continues to be a critical safety-net for forest counties as we work to establish a permanent county payments solution, diversify rural economies, improve forest management and forest health, strengthen historic forest revenue sharing with local governments and ensure that our forests provide a range of values such as wood fiber, clean water, and jobs for local economies. As you are aware, the fiscal year 2018 Omnibus spending bill included a two-year reauthorization for SRS, which retroactively covered fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018. Under current law, fiscal year 2018 funds are to be dispersed as soon as possible after the close of fiscal year 2018.

With thousands of workers having been furloughed in rural communities across the country and with the public having lost access to many of their public lands, the government shutdown had dire consequences in many rural areas. Given these concerns, please make every effort to ensure your agencies disperse SRS payments in a timely manner. Please let us know as soon as possible your agency's procedure for dispersing these payments, including when and how they will be dispersed.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Vicki Christiansen, Chief, United States Forest Service  
The Honorable Brian Steed, Deputy Director, Bureau of Land Management